

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for employers applying via Skills for Care

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## 1. General

### What is the Workforce Development Fund?

The Workforce Development Fund (WDF) is a funding opportunity for adult social care employers in England.

It's a finite pot of money which allows you to reclaim some of the costs incurred developing your paid workforce.

WDF is supported by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) who enable the funding to be disbursed to adult social care employers by Skills for Care and our partners across England.

### **What will WDF fund?**

The WDF will fund a range of [qualifications and apprenticeships](#) that started on or before 31 March 2024.

Qualifications and apprenticeship standards certificates must have a date of issue between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2025.

### **Who can claim WDF?**

All organisations that provide an adult social care service and directly employ care staff and bank staff in England can claim the fund. This includes:

- hospices whose adult social care workers are not NHS funded;
- workers recruited from abroad and those who are working on a Health and Social Care Visa.

The fund cannot be used to develop volunteers.

### **Is this funding guaranteed?**

No, as the funding is finite. As the funding year progresses, there is a chance the money will run out. There are simple ways to give your organisation the best opportunity to benefit from the funding that is available:

- Complete your direct access declaration form at the earliest opportunity. It must be received by Skills for Care by 28 February 2025 for you to access the fund in the 2024-25 funding year;
- Sign your grant letter;
- Keep in regular contact with us during the course of the year;
- Update your Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) account(s) in line with the advertised requirements early in the funding year;
- Submit claims on receipt of the learner's certificate;
- Set aside some administration time to process claims.

We may limit the amount of funding that you can claim in any submission or within the funding year to maximise the number of employers who benefit from the fund. We will advise you when this is the case.

### **What is the maximum funding that can be claimed for each learner in 2024-25?**

A maximum of £2,035 can be claimed per learner per funding year. It is possible to claim funding to support more than one qualification or apprenticeship per learner up to the limit of £2,035.

**Why has WDF been limited to claiming a maximum of £2,035 per learner per financial year?**

Skills for Care wants to expand the reach of WDF to ensure that as many employers and their employees as possible within the adult social care sector have the opportunity to benefit from the fund.

**Will the WDF fund the Care Certificate, Food Hygiene, First Aid, Moving and Assisting and other induction and refresher courses?**

No. The fund is to support the continuing professional development of staff and will not fund induction or mandatory training.

**What do I do if I have issues with learning providers?**

Learning providers are chosen by employers at your own discretion. Skills for Care recommends that you have a written agreement with your learning provider when commissioning learning and development.

If you're unhappy with a learning provider you should consider alternative providers. Any issues between employers and learning providers should be resolved directly between the parties involved.

You can use Skills for Care's [endorsed provider directory](#) to search for high quality learning providers.

**Our learning provider has gone into administration. We had already paid the learning provider, and our staff are half-way through their qualifications. What do we do in this situation?**

If it is not possible for you to reclaim your money from the learning provider, then the best solution is to ensure your learners have possession of their learner portfolios (theirs by legal right) and look to negotiate a deal with a new provider to deliver the remainder of the qualifications from the learners' midway point, rather than starting the qualifications again from the beginning.

**A learning provider has offered to deliver qualifications to my staff and has assured me that these qualifications are fully funded through the WDF. OR, when looking for a learning provider, their website states that the qualifications they deliver are fully funded through the WDF. Is this correct?**

No. This is because:

- The DHSC provides a finite amount of money;
- As the funding year progresses, there is a chance the money will run out;
- Employers need to pay the learning provider for the learning that is being commissioned and then reclaim a funding contribution through WDF on completion;
- The qualifications/apprenticeships must have been started on or before 31 March 2024 for WDF to be claimed;

- There is a funding cap of £2,035 per learner;
- Organisations' claims may be capped;
- We advise that you seek clarification from any learning providers making such promises as they cannot provide this guarantee.

Please note: The WDF should not be confused with other Government funding initiatives, such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency who commission learning providers directly. Some employers choose a combination of Education and Skills Funding Agency and WDF funding to help develop their workforce.

For the most comprehensive information about WDF please visit [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdfdirectaccess](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdfdirectaccess) or contact us. Our [Guide to developing your staff](#) provides guidance on how you can develop your workforce.

### **Can funds be allocated per unit?**

No. Funding is claimed on the completion and certification of a full qualification or apprenticeship. This should be considered in terms of the length of time you will need to wait before funding can be claimed.

### **Why can I only claim funding for RQF diplomas that have been approved by Skills for Care?**

Skills for Care has developed qualification specifications in conjunction with sector representatives to outline the mandatory content of these qualifications and will approve qualifications developed to these specifications. Any approved qualifications will show the qualification approved by Skills for Care logo. We will maintain a list of approved qualifications on [our website](#) as they become available. Funding is assigned to these qualifications because we are confident that they meet sector need.

## **2. Eligibility criteria**

### **What do I need to do in order to be eligible to claim WDF?**

To claim directly through Skills for Care:

- Complete and submit a direct access declaration form by 28 February 2025;
- Sign and return a grant letter;
- Meet the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) requirements for WDF as set out below;
- Submit funding claims and evidence directly to Skills for Care. Third parties such as learning providers cannot do this on your behalf.

Guidance on how to complete a claim will be issued to you and made available on our website. Should you need to contact us you must contact and liaise with us directly.

### **What is the ASC-WDS?**

The ASC-WDS is a national database of information about social care organisations and replaced the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC). It can be used to help employers benchmark how they compare with other care organisations and crucially provides information to Government about the changing needs of the adult social care sector, informing policy and practice. Usage of the ASC-WDS system as advertised is a requirement for employers wishing to access WDF.

For more information about how to use the ASC-WDS and to learn more about the benefits of this resource please visit our [website](#). To login or register for an account please visit <https://asc-wds.skillsforcare.org.uk>.

### **Why do the CQC provider and location ids (where applicable), the main service type and website details have to be completed on the direct access declaration form and organisation declaration form?**

These fields are included to assist with validating that claimants are adult social care employers.

### **What are the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) requirements in relation to accessing WDF?**

Recipients of the fund are required to ensure and confirm that the required fields within ASC-WDS are accurate and up-to-date in line with the eligibility criteria:

1. You must fully complete and update an ASC-WDS workplace record on or after 1 April 2024.
2. You must fully complete individual worker records for all staff with a minimum of 90% of the data completed. These must be fully updated on or after 1 April 2024.
3. Individual records for workers completed before 1 April 2024 which are included in the 90% calculation must be both fully completed and updated.

A workplace's ASC-WDS account is expected to be an accurate reflection of its service and workforce. If your service or workforce changes significantly during the year it is expected that your ASC-WDS will be updated. Failure to do so may affect your ability to claim funding.

### **How can I tell if I have met the ASC-WDS requirements and how will eligibility be monitored?**

You must ensure that your data is up to date.

**Single workplaces:** When logged in as a single workplace, check eligibility by going to 'Check your WDF data'

- This in-browser function will show you whether you have met eligibility at workplace level and staff record level and will highlight areas where more data is required.

- Meeting requirements - The overview page will tell you if you have met the requirements for this financial year and the date you met eligibility.
- Not Meeting requirements – The overview page will tell you if you have not yet met requirements – Click ‘View your WDF data’ to see which areas need to be addressed.
- If, after meeting eligibility, you make changes to your workplace or staff records do not worry – click ‘Keep your WDF data up to date’ to see what needs addressing for next financial year. You will still meet the criteria up to 31 March.
- **Parent/subsidiary accounts:** You have the same functionality as single workplaces, but for all your workplaces.

Click ‘Check your WDF data’ – your overview page will say meeting criteria once all your workplaces have met the requirements. To check each workplace individually click ‘View your workplaces’.

If you have met eligibility in previous years, you will need to confirm the answers are still correct after 1 April.

**Local Authorities are mandated to complete an annual return on the ASC-WDS. Does this also meet the criteria for claiming WDF?**

The local authority workforce return is a different set of requirements than the WDF, so you won’t automatically be able to claim funding. To view the full ASC-WDS requirements for the WDF please [click here](#).

**Can the Workforce Development Fund be accessed for shared lives carers?**

Yes, as long as the claiming organisation has incurred the learning and development costs for the shared lives carer and meets the eligibility criteria for the fund.

**How should shared lives carer information be recorded in ASC-WDS?**

- All shared lived schemes have the option to include shared lives carer worker information in their ASC-WDS account(s) **in addition** to that of their **directly** employed workers (e.g. co-ordinators).
- Local authorities should include the scheme as part of their annual return and have the option to provide the shared lives carer information.
- Recording shared lives carer information: if you decide to include shared lives carers then they should be recorded on your workplace record in your total staff figure and a staff record should be completed for each carer with ‘Other’ selected for their Contract type.
- All other information should be completed in accordance with the staff record requirements.

## **I am claiming money for learning and development from another public funding source, can I make a claim under the WDF?**

Employers should review the points below and then decide whether to make a claim for WDF.

1. The WDF is a contribution to the cost of paid employees undertaking vocational qualifications and other learning from our funded list. This funding allows you to claim from more than one source.
2. Claims can only be made for qualifications or apprenticeships which started on or before 31 March 2024.
3. Each funding source will have its own rules/requirements and it is the responsibility of the recipient of the funding to make sure that they understand and adhere to the rules of the funding they are accessing.
4. WDF is a retrospective funding stream. The employer must have already incurred all costs prior to claiming a contribution towards these costs from WDF. The overarching principle of the WDF is that employers cannot make a profit from their employees undertaking training. You cannot claim for costs that you have not directly incurred.
5. Where employers are claiming from more than one source of public funding they must ensure that they do not claim the same cost from more than one source as this would constitute double funding and is not allowed. If your staff are completing qualifications which have been funded through another source of public funding, you cannot include any costs such as registration, training delivery and certification when calculating your training costs which have been covered by other funding.
6. It is an employer's responsibility to ensure that they do not claim more funding than the cost to them of employees undertaking training. Direct costs such as course fees, employees' salaries and backfill if required (i.e. wage replacement costs) can be included for this fund. For each qualification or apprenticeship the employer cannot claim back more than the advertised WDF contribution, even if the costs incurred exceed this.
7. Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make.
8. The evidence requirement for claiming WDF for qualifications and apprenticeships is a copy of the learner's certificate which includes the advertised criteria, set out in section 3 of this document

## **I am accessing 'free' training through a learning provider - am I able to make a claim under the WDF?**

Learning which is advertised as 'free' is sometimes available from learning providers where they are receiving funding from another body to cover the cost of delivery, such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency.



Where this is the case, claims can still be made under WDF for associated costs, such as employees' salaries while they are undertaking training, coaching and mentoring costs, external venue costs for the training, cost of expert witness testimony and if required backfill (wage replacement costs).

This is a retrospective funding stream and all costs must have been incurred prior to claiming a contribution towards these costs from WDF. The overarching principle is that an employer is not making a profit from their employees undertaking training. See question above 'I am claiming money for learning and development from another public funding source, can I make a claim under the WDF?'

The evidence requirement for claiming for associated costs of qualifications and apprenticeships is a copy of the learner's certificate which includes the criteria set out in section 3 of this document.

Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make and provide these when requested by Skills for Care, the DHSC or an authorised representative acting on their behalf. Where associated costs are being claimed these records may contain staff salary information, timesheets, invoices for external venue costs etc. as appropriate. You cannot claim for costs that you have not directly incurred or that have been covered by alternative funding.

**My organisation pays the apprenticeship levy, can I make a claim under the WDF? (The response below is also relevant to employers who receive transferred levy funds.)**

The apprenticeship levy can only be used to pay training delivery and end-point assessment costs. The levy is a tax being applied by Government so it would not be appropriate to allow public money to offset it.

You can claim WDF alongside the apprenticeship levy but it will not be possible to use the WDF towards training delivery and end-point assessment costs. However, the WDF can be used towards the associated costs of training so for levy paying employers this is what the fund would be claimed towards.

Employers should review the points below and then decide whether to make a claim for WDF.

1. The WDF is a contribution to the cost of paid employees undertaking vocational qualifications and apprenticeships from our funded list. This funding allows you to claim from more than one source.
2. Claims can only be made for qualifications or apprenticeships which started on or before 31 March 2024.
3. Each funding source will have its own rules/requirements and it is the responsibility of the recipient of the funding to make sure that they understand and adhere to the rules of the funding they are accessing.

4. WDF is a retrospective funding stream. The employer must have already incurred all costs prior to claiming a contribution towards these costs from WDF. The overarching principle of the WDF is that employers cannot make a profit from their employees undertaking training. You cannot claim for costs that you have not directly incurred.
5. Where employers are claiming from more than one source of public funding they must ensure that they do not claim the same cost from more than one source as this would constitute double funding and is not allowed. If your staff are completing qualifications which have been funded through another source of public funding, you cannot include any costs such as registration, training delivery, end point assessment and certification when calculating your training costs which have been covered by other funding.
6. It is an employers' responsibility to ensure that they do not claim more funding than the cost to them of employees undertaking training. Direct costs such as course fees, employees' salaries and backfill if required (i.e. wage replacement costs) can be included for this fund. For each qualification or apprenticeship the employer cannot claim back more than the advertised WDF contribution, even if the costs incurred exceed this.
7. Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make.
8. The evidence requirement for claiming WDF for qualifications and apprenticeships is a copy of the learner's certificate which includes the advertised criteria, set out in section 3 of this document.

When working out the total cost of learning and end-point assessment, levy paying employers need to exclude the cost of training delivery and end-point assessment which is covered by the levy and calculate based on the remaining costs such as the 20% off the job learning time or wage replacement if they have to bring in cover while the apprentice is undertaking training/off the job learning. The evidence of costs should be retained on file by the employer and they will use the diploma and final standard certificates as set out above to evidence their claims.

**My organisation does not pay the apprenticeship levy, but we do employ apprentices and access funding towards this. Can we still claim the WDF?**

Non-levy paying employers pay 5% of the training delivery costs and the government pays the remaining 95%. This is completely separate to the WDF. When calculating the total cost of training to determine whether the WDF can be claimed, the funds that you have directly paid towards training delivery (which would be a maximum of £150 on an apprenticeship standard capped at £3,000<sup>1</sup>) can be factored into your

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<sup>1</sup> Example based on funding band for the Adult Care Worker and Lead Adult Care Worker standards with a start date before 26 June 2023

total cost of learning. The 95% from the government (£2,850 in this example) cannot because that would constitute double funding and that is not allowed.

The information set out in points 1 to 8 under the question above 'My organisation pays the apprenticeship levy, can I make a claim under the WDF?' should be used to answer this question.

**I am a levy paying employer and have used all my apprenticeship levy. I am therefore accessing funding for apprenticeships from an alternative source of public funding. Can I still access the WDF?**

Please see the above question, 'My organisation does not pay the apprenticeship levy, but we do employ apprentices and access funding towards this. Can we still claim the WDF?' You should apply the answer to this question when deciding whether to access the WDF for those learners who are not being funded through the levy.

**My organisation works with young people transitioning into adults' services. Are we eligible to claim WDF?**

We recognise this is a grey area as transition doesn't fit neatly into either children's or adult workforces. For the purpose of the WDF, if the staff are working primarily with people aged 18 years and over, your organisation will be eligible to claim. If they are working primarily with people aged under 18 then we will be unable to accept a claim. It's your judgment call, as you will know the make-up of your client group.

### **3. Evidence requirements**

**What is the evidence to claim a qualification?**

The evidence to claim a qualification is a copy of the learner's certificate from the awarding organisation which must contain the following information:

- candidate name
- candidate registration number
- unique learner number
- name of qualification
- qualification code as per the list of funded qualifications and learning
- the date of issue of the certificate be between 1 January 2024 - 31 March 2025
- name of the awarding organisation
- name of the learning provider or centre number.

**What is the evidence to claim an apprenticeship standard?**

The evidence to claim an apprenticeship standard is a copy of the learner's diploma certificate to claim the diploma within the apprenticeship standard (full detail as set out in the above question, what is the evidence to claim a qualification) and a copy of the final apprenticeship standard certificate. The final apprenticeship standard certificate must contain the following information:

- candidate name

- unique learner number
- name of the apprenticeship standard
- apprenticeship standard code as per the list of funded qualifications and learning (this can be written on)
- the date of award must be between 1 January 2024 - 31 March 2025
- the certificate must be issued by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE).

### **What is a Unique Learner Number\* (ULN)?**

A unique learner number is a 10-digit number which is allocated to a learner and will be theirs for life. This links to the personal learning record which is a lifelong, verified record of a learner's qualification achievements. Learning providers will be able to obtain a ULN for any learner who does not have one.

### **How do I claim for candidates if their name has changed due to marriage/divorce etc.?**

Submit the claim as normal but include details in the covering email to advise which candidate has had the name change providing the existing and the new details. We can then update our records and any further claims will not require the same email.

### **Where can I find guidance/information on the taxation aspect of the payments?**

Skills for Care does not provide any specific guidance for the taxable treatment of WDF grants to recipients. The HMRC web site ([www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)) advises, 'Financial assistance in the form of grants is subject to the normal taxation rules' therefore we would advise you to seek guidance from your dedicated professional advisors as to the tax treatment for your case.

## **4. Using the funding claim form**

### **How do I claim WDF?**

You must submit a fully completed funding claim form to Skills for Care. The funding claim form will be unique to each employer and must be filled out correctly.

Note:

- The original format of the electronic form must not be changed in any way.
- Any amendments to the form cannot be recognised by our system and will result in delay in the claim being processed and payment being issued.
- Additional lines or columns must not be added and a new claim form should be raised if additional space is required.
- For example, if a workplace is not showing on the drop-down menu and is manually typed in, our system will not recognise them as being eligible for funding and will reject that part of the claim.

To claim for qualifications, the funding claim form must show:

- The organisation
- Candidate name

- Unique learner number
- Awarding organisation
- Candidate registration/enrolment number.

Values will automatically be added when you enter the qualification code.

Please ensure that you put entries for qualifications and apprenticeships on separate lines even where they are for the same learner.

If, because you have incurred lower costs than the advertised funding value or you have received funding from an alternative source, you wish to claim a lower amount of funding than the advertised value, this can be done by completing the claim form with the candidate and learning details, then including details of the candidates/values to be claimed in your covering e-mail where this is the case.

The completed funding claim form, submission form and evidence should be sent to the designated mailbox. If any information is missing from the funding claim form, Skills for Care reserves the right to return the claim.

You can submit as many claims as you want as and when you have them throughout the period of the grant agreement. Skills for Care reserves the right to delay processing claims if you have already received a significant amount of funding to ensure that other employers have an opportunity to claim. You will be notified if this is the case.

### **What should I put on the Organisation section of the funding claim form?**

This is the workplace at which the candidate being claimed for is based. You simply need to select the relevant workplace from the drop-down menu. Please do not manually enter an organisation, this will delay your claim.

### **What should I do if a workplace is not showing on the funding claim form?**

If a workplace is not showing on the funding claim form, they have either:

- Not met the ACS-WDS requirements for WDF
- Not been listed on our system as a workplace because we have not received a fully completed direct access declaration form

You will need to contact the disbursement team who will be able to advise further.

### **When will I get an updated claim form?**

You will receive your first claim form once we have received your signed grant letter and you have at least one workplace that is meeting the ASC-WDS requirements for WDF. Our WDF system is updated on a weekly basis to show all the workplaces that have achieved the ASC-WDS requirements. If appropriate, you will be sent an updated claim form.

**Can I use an old claim form?**

Yes, we are able to accept any funding claim form from the 2024-25 funding year, unless advised otherwise and providing the workplace you want to claim funding for shows in the drop-down menu. However, we advise using the most up to date form.

**5. Payments****When will we receive payment from Skills for Care for evidence submitted?**

Skills for Care undertakes to pay all subsequent claims as and when they are submitted and processed unless you are advised otherwise. We will not be responsible for any delay in payment caused by incomplete or illegible claims or claims sent to the wrong mailbox.

**How will I receive payment?**

Payments will be carried out via BACs. Please make sure that you have submitted your most recent bank details to your Disbursement Assistant. Any correspondence relating to payments will be emailed to the lead contact and administrator. If you require a copy of the remittance advice to also be sent to your finance department please inform us of the necessary email address so that we can copy them in.